

THE
**FUTURE
OF
AMERICA'S
NATIONAL
PARKS**

First Annual
Centennial Strategy for

Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



Site: PAAL

Year: 2007

Vision Statement

The staff of Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site believes that the park should become a preeminent unit of the National Park Service, with a modern impact to its historical importance.

Palo Alto is the scene of first clash of the war U.S.-Mexican War. It was the site of many other firsts as well: Americas first war on foreign soil, the first battle between Republics, the first usage of certain military tactics, the first trail by fire for many military leaders. It opened a conflict that would double the size of the United States, adding vast territory that encompasses the Grand Canyon, Big Bend, Yosemite, and other National Parks and prompted creation of the U.S. Department of the Interior.

The site also has a darker side. The battle that occurred there negatively influenced U.S.-Mexican relations for more than 160 years. The clash helped to ignite a Civil War from simmering sectional differences. It is a place where hundreds of brave men suffered and died.

Nevertheless, is generally unknown by the American people and underappreciated even in the local community. Few Americans have heard of the battle. Fewer have ever visited the battlefield and associated sites in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas.

To counter this trend, the park has adopted a two-pronged approach which emphasizes preservation and education. Over the new decade, Palo Alto Battlefield intends to emerge as a leader in preservation of sites from this war in the United States. The greatest focus will be on Palo Alto itself: obtaining core battlefield lands, conducting surveys of the site, and restoring the area to its historic condition. Attention will as go toward encouraging preservation of associated battlefields and forts that represent a significant part of the Palo Alto story. By 2016, the park expects to make significant progress toward preserving one of the most significant complexes of battlefields in the nation.

The park will also emphasize outreach and education. Park staff will continue to develop public awareness through programs, exhibits, and digital media. We will also seek to excel in generating that information. This would be made possible through a research center that encourages study of local sites, of the war, and of its causes and consequences. This center would also serve as a place to train educators and the public about ways to present the significance of this event.

To accomplish these tasks, the Park also will give great attention to vibrant and innovative partnerships. The park has already worked with others to respond to resource threats and basic needs. Over the next decade, Palo Alto plans to become more proactive and develop ties that will permit the park to rival any unit of the National Park Service. By 2016, Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site, plans to develop into Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park—a well-known site that is a “must-experience” destination for visitors and scholars.

Park/ Superintendent/ Program Manager

Douglas Murphy (Acting Superintendent)

Site: PAAL

STEWARDSHIP

☒ Provide inspiring, safe, and accessible places for people to enjoy - the standard to which all other park systems aspire.

☒ Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Palo Alto will extend trail systems to provide safe access to all core areas of the Battlefield.

☐ The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Site: PAAL

STEWARDSHIP

☒ **Improve the condition of park resources and assets.**

☒ **Restore native habitats by controlling invasive species and reintroducing key plant and animal species.**

"The park will complete environmental assessments and initiate controls of feral hogs on the battlefield. The park will also step up efforts to contain the invasive plant "Mother of Thousands", while restoring native cord grass to the core battlefield.

☒ The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

☒ **Improve high-priority assets to acceptable condition, as measured by the Facility Condition Index.**

The park will focus efforts on restoration of the core Palo Alto Battlefield: removing cattle tanks, restoring resacas, and eliminating other man-made alterations to the historic landscape.

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☒ **Improve the natural resources in parks, as measured by the vital signs developed under the Natural Resource Challenge.**

The park will complete inventories and monitor the vital signs of the park in conjunction with the Gulf Coast Inventory and Monitoring Network

☐ The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

☒ **Complete all cultural resource inventories for designated priority resources.**

Palo Alto will complete a full archeological inventory of the National Historic Site and a Historic Resource Study of all primary areas associated with the first campaign of the U.S_Mexican War, including Palo Alto, Resaca de la Palma, Fort Brown, Fort Polk, and Carricitos. Through partnerships, the park will also pursue archeological inventory of Fort Brown.

☒ The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Site: PAAL

STEWARDSHIP

☒ Set the standard of excellence in urban park landscape design and maintenance.

☒ Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Palo Alto will develop a partnership with the Brownsville Community Foundation to develop the Resaca de la Palma site and maintain the site as an urban unit of the Battlefield.

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Site: PAAL

ENVIRONMENT

☒ Inspire an environmental conscience in Americans.

☒ Demonstrate environmental excellence through increased use of alternative energy and fuels at every park.

The park will work with facility of the University of Texas at Brownsville to examine ways to utilize solar power to reduce dependency on other sources of energy

☐ The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Site: PAAL

RECREATION

☒ Encourage collaboration among and assist park and recreation systems at every level-federal, regional, state, local-to help build an outdoor recreation network accessible to all Americans.

☒ Rehabilitate over 2,000 miles of trails within or connected to national parks, including trails accessible to those with disabilities.

The park will resurface all primary trails and extend the park trail network to all key areas of the core battlefield of Palo Alto. Efforts will continue to provide trails at the Resaca de la Palma site and to develop and maintain a hike/bike trail in cooperation with the City of Brownsville, Texas.

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Site: PAAL

RECREATION

☒ Establish "volun-tourism" excursions to national parks for volunteers to help achieve natural and cultural resource protection goals.

☒ Increase annual volunteer hours by 100 percent, from 5.2 million hours to 10.4 million hours.

The park will work to increase volunteer hours in traditional areas like desk coverage, and special events. Palo Alto will also work with the University of Texas at Brownsville to develop a joint training program in which college students will receive college credit for training for and serving in interpretive roles in the park and at associated sites.

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Site: PAAL

RECREATION

☒ Expand partnerships with schools and boys and girls associations to show how national park experiences can improve children's lives.

☒ Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Continue to develop relationships with all school districts of the Rio Grande Valley of Texas to encourage increased visitation in field trips, special events, and park resource projects.

☐ The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Site: PAAL

RECREATION

☒ Focus national, regional, and local tourism efforts to reach diverse audiences and young people and to attract visitors to lesser-known parks.

☒ Increase visitation by 25 percent at lesser-known parks through a national tourism effort aimed at helping people to discover the breadth of parks and experiences.

The park will work with partners at Resaca de la Palma and Fort Brown to increase the draw of the park and to increase its appeal as a national attraction. The park will also expand its trail system, develop a monthly living history programs, and increase other special events to draw additional visitors.

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☒ Increase the number of visitors that attend ranger-facilitated programs such as campfire talks, hikes, and school programs.

The park will develop a regular schedule of living history programs and will work with partners to develop an interpretive intern program to increase its ability to provide programs to a broad range of audiences

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Site: PAAL

EDUCATION

☒ Cooperate with educators to provide curriculum materials, high-quality programs, and park-based and online learning.

☒ Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The park will continue to work with schools to provide enjoyable and educational field trips and to develop materials that link the park mission to school curricula. The park will also work with local universities with the goal of developing an internship/outreach program that will train college students about the park, educate them about interpretive techniques, and bring them into the park to assist with programs, field trips, and events.

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Site: PAAL

EDUCATION

☒ Introduce young people and their families to national parks by using exciting media and technology.

☒ Increase the number of web hits through the introduction of advanced, interactive features that attract young people to national parks.

Palo Alto will strive to move its soldier database and other interactive programs on-line to draw the interest and attention of citizens of all ages.

☐ The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

☒ Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Palo Alto will continue to develop interactive digital programs and exhibits for use at the park visitor center. Special emphasis will be given to improvement of the parks soldier database to increase appeal and functionality

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Site: PAAL

EDUCATION

☒ Promote life-long learning to connect generations through park experiences.

☒ Enroll an additional two million children in the Junior Ranger program.

Palo Alto will develop a new Jr. Ranger booklet, provide on-line access to this materials and encourage local participation in the web-ranger program

☒ The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

☒ Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Palo Alto intends to develop materials for a ?Senior Ranger? program, similar to the Jr. Ranger but geared to the many Senior Citizens that come to the park each year. This will stress multi-day programs and activities for older citizens, similar to and in conjunction with, Elderhostel programs.

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Site: PAAL

EDUCATION

☒ Impart to every American a sense of their citizen ownership of their national parks.

☒ Increase visitors' satisfaction, understanding, and appreciation of the parks they visit.

Palo Alto will continue efforts to expand offerings for the public at the Palo Alto site and at associated sites. At Palo Alto, the park will pursue expansion of the trail system to permit access to all important areas of the core battlefield. We will also provide additional markers, interpretive panels, and field presentation to provide visitors with a greater appreciation and understanding of the site. At the visitor center, the park will seek to provide improved exhibits, with more interactive features. The park will also develop a regular schedule of living history programs and special events.

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Site: PAAL

PROFESSIONALISM

☒ Be one of the top 10 places to work in America.

☒ Meet 100 percent of diversity recruitment goals by employing people who reflect the face of America.

The park will continue to make hiring decisions that reflect the diversity of the nation and that best serve efforts to attract and educate a diverse population of park visitors.

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Site: PAAL

PROFESSIONALISM

☒ Use strategic planning to promote management excellence.

☒ Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The park will continue to perform long- and short-range planning to achieve the mission set forth in the park's enabling legislation. Palo Alto will also revisit its General Management Plan and pursue development on an updated plan that better reflects the realities facing the park since the completion of the 1998 GMP.

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Site: PAAL

PROFESSIONALISM

☒ Promote a safety and health culture for all employees and visitors.

☒ Reduce the number of employee lost-time incidents and serious visitor injuries by 20 percent.

Palo Alto will continue to emphasize safety through training and in workplace decisions. The park will strive to reduce workplace injuries to 0 per year and maintain the visitor accident rate at 0 as well.

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Site: PAAL

PROFESSIONALISM

☒ Model what it means to work in partnership.

☒ Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The park will strive to formalize partnerships with the Brownsville Community Foundation for the preservation of the Resaca de la Palma Battlefield. This will include efforts to make the park the primary owner of this battlefield, cooperation on the construction of a lease park headquarters facility, and joint efforts to develop and interpret the site. The park will also work with the University of Texas at Brownsville on the development of a joint research facility. This center?owned by the University-- would hold park research collections, which would be maintained and managed by University staff. The park will acquire additional research materials and provide equipment like microfilm readers and copiers. The goal is to develop a facility that will be at the core of a larger interpretive/education partnership and that will serve as one of the premiere research facilities on the U.S.-Mexican War in the nation.

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Site: PAAL

PROFESSIONALISM

☒ Make national parks the first choice in philanthropic giving among those concerned about environmental, cultural, and recreational values.

☒ Improve communications and marketing capacity to increase public understanding of our mission, opportunities, and benefits.

The park, working with and through partners, will continue to stress the importance of its mission and encourage visitors, community groups, and fund-giving foundations to support park projects, especially in the areas of land acquisition, the preservation of the Resaca de la Palma battlefield, and the preservation of the Fort Brown NHL.

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